

DCI Note  
10 April

Bob -

Didn't get much time on this -

Few notes -

Generally OK if

Return my script &

touch up of John's.

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DCI Notes

9 Apr 79

VN-PRC-USSR-KAMPUCHEA

I. Retrospective on Chinese performance

1. Signalled intent - especially their limited political objectives

So doing skillfully controlled their risks

2. Whether mil performance was restrained entirely because of limited objectives or because ineffectiveness also - unclear

Even casualty figures very uncertain - but does appear were sizeable Chinese losses -

Probably prepared to accept

3. Worthwhile from PRC viewpoint primarily because of impact on image of USSR as Asian power; + VN as *legitimizing not as big a threat as thought*  
PRC Especially in ASEAN created impression Sov not respond in very meaningful manner in fulfilling commitment to VN; & in fact backed down before PRC challenge

Chinese must view as net plus - primary objective

4. Secondary objective was to rescue beleaguered Kampuchea

Succeeded in short term at least

30,000 VN troops withdrawn

5. Two downside impacts:

- a. Impression of an aggressive PRC embedded in some areas where counts - most particularly Japan

Must spill over to ASEAN also

Though Thais seem to be accommodating PRC very well

- b. Sov-VN response

Can PRC "win" over long run

II. Focus on Kampuchea

1. Most likely way for Sov/VN to attempt recoup from this setback would be to complete conquest of Kampuchea

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Paradox:

(Kam-VN Mil.  
Forces Map)

- a. VN continued movement of forces to north -  
100-150,000 in Hanoi - border area now vice  
70,000 in Dec.

Including 3 div. units from Kampuchea

- b. But continued mobilization-  
Econ cost noted in PDB

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d.

Unclear what Pol Pot's status is -

Whether can hold out until rainy season -

May? - June/July

VN effort clearly aimed at sealing border

How resolute will Kriangsak be?

Didn't give much in Moscow

- e. If VN really are successful - i.e. not stamp out guerrillas  
but turn into running sore that doesn't hobble rice planting  
economy in countryside & control of urban areas -

-Rules out compromise solution

-Replaces challenge of 25 Dec. before PRC

2. - If is reasonably decisive resolution in Kampuchea in favor of VN -

-Impact on PRC-VN talks adversely

-Could tempt PRC apply new pressures

Renewed hostilities not out of?

(Mil. Forces Along  
Sino-VN Border Map)

Still retain 400,000 troops

Apparently wanted to suck VN main force units into  
battle

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Only got a few  
Now have more

Expensive in losses  
Would blame outbreak on VN

3. If stand off in Kampuchea - will make talks more meaningful

Seems clear everyone thinking of some compromise formula in  
Kampuchea

Coalition gov't acceptable to both - or continue struggle  
in new way

Sihanouk's name always crops up

Have to separate from Beijing somehow

Have get Sihanouk to play -  
Certainly not with Pol Pot

Another option - build on KCP

But Pol Pot is the most effective leader

Besides no practical way to get Pol Pot to step aside -

If do, danger will be VN conquest.

Looks like prolonged negotiation

Lots maneuvering behind scenes -

Militarily in Kampuchea  
Pol Kamp, Hanoi, Beijing

III. Key factor will be direction of Sov-VN relationship

1. Chinese policy seems to be to drive VN into greater dependence on  
Sovs

Economic disruption  
Mil. needs - e.g. airlift

PRC apparently believe/hope that such dependence will lead to  
tensions & resentments that will turn VN onto more balanced  
course between PRC & USSR

One hand - Sovs probably more wary of becoming too identified  
with Hanoi's interests as did publicly with treaty Friendship  
last Nov. -

& then having their promises called in highly risky  
circumstance

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Even preliminary entry into Cam Rahn Bay is having perception impact in Far East

Sovs never been delicate in such dealings - & Sovs recognize VN tough ally deal with

#### IV. Soviet dilemmas

1. Little choice other support VN - problem of how to contain the commitment to reasonable bounds where reputation not at stake beyond ability control events
2. Natural avenue is to strengthen position vis-a-vis Beijing independently of VN - i.e. Sino-Soviet border

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5. Fortunately both read other's signals properly - questions now:

-How much more confidence does Deng feel -

More or less cautionary as goes forward

-How concerned are Sovs at recouping any loss of image?

-How much were Sovs. persuaded that PRC was supported by US -  
& hence is there a permanent chance in balanced power in  
F. E. -from Sov perspective?

6. Both sides have more forces in position

Both have larger commitment

Can negotiation substitute for tension & hostilities?

Indochina

A. China/Vietnam

1. Chinese attack into Vietnam which began 17 February culminated with fall of Lang Son on 2 March; on 5 March Chinese forces ordered to pull back into their own territory.
  - Attack was of major proportions; build-up involved element of as many as 10 armies totalling over 400,000 men, with 2 additional armies in reserve. Chinese air strength also built up to 600-700 aircraft
  - Perhaps 130,000 men actually took part in fighting inside Vietnam (approx. 12 divisions) with remainder just across border
  - Magnitude of Chinese effort evident from fact that until 24 December only forces Chinese had along VN border were numerically small local units.
  - We estimate Vietnamese initially had 40-50,000 men along border, but VN forces were augmented as fighting progressed.
2. Size and nature of Chinese build-up and political signals from Chinese sources on need to "punish" Vietnam convinced us beforehand that attack was likely, and we issued warning memorandum on 14 February.
3. Chinese had several objectives in mind:
  - As just noted, ostensible purpose was to "punish" VN for alleged "provocations" along Sino-VN border (incursions, armed attacks against people and property).

- However, more fundamental (but unstated) purpose was to demonstrate to Vietnamese that China would not permit them to intrude with impunity into areas of SEA of vital concern to China, e.g., Kampuchea. In wake of VN invasion of Kampuchea, China wanted to show it was not a "paper tiger".
- China's offensive also intended to show USSR that it cannot get away with using Vietnamese as Soviet surrogates in SEA in way that Cubans have been employed in Africa and Middle East.
- Some Chinese sources said, too, in a wider context China wanted to make point to the US that the way to respond to Soviet "hegemonism" and activities of Soviet-backed Cubans is not to be passive but to react with force.
- At same time, Chinese did not desire a prolonged conflict. At beginning of attack they said fighting was to be limited both in extent and duration, and that Chinese forces would be withdrawn since Vietnam had been taught a lesson.
  - ° We foresaw Chinese goals might indeed be limited and speculated in 14 Feb warning memo that fighting might not last beyond several weeks, and would not extend to attacks on Hanoi.



- ° Chinese clearly were considering international opinion - with Vietnam widely blamed for invading and occupying Kampuchea, they did not wish to be put in same position.
  - ° They also wished to keep scale of hostilities below threshold which would compel Soviets to intervene in support of Vietnam.
4. Invasion began at dawn on 17th and Chinese attacked virtually every town, village, and military position along entire 1300 km frontier.
- Most assaults by battalions or regiments.
  - One or more divisions attacked at Lao Cai, Cao Bang, Dong Dang, Mong Cai.
  - Tanks and artillery provided fire support to infantry.
  - Chinese began by seizing a narrow 5 to 10 km strip, but expanded this once VN border defenses overcome.
  - Deepest incursions in Lao Cai, Cao Bang, and Dong Dang-- Lang Son areas.
    - As much as 25 kilometers deep from Lao Cai
    - At least 25 kilometers in Lang Son area
    - Up to 50 kilometers deep in Cao Bang sector
5. Initial major Chinese military objective was destruction of Vietnamese provincial forces defending border region.

-- Seven or 8 such divisions, 40-50,000 men, were posted to defend Lao Cai, Cao Bang, Dong Dang-Lang Son, and Mong Cai.

6. Second major objective was to inflict significant casualties defending Hanoi were initially not committed, but later some elements were sent into combat.
7. Third major objective was to ease pressure on Kampuchean resistance by forcing Hanoi to recall some combat forces from that region.

-- This purpose also accomplished to some extent.

8. Lang Son became major set-piece battle following Chinese capture of Dong Dang.

-- VN moved infantry, tanks, APC's, artillery northwards; partly from main force units near Hanoi, but, also from elsewhere in Vietnam, Laos, Kampuchea.

-- VN sent considerable number of aircraft north (F-5's, MIG-19s, A-37s, C-130 cargo aircraft, helicopter gunships and transports). However, air power not used by either side except for reconnaissance.

-- Vietnamese main forces alerted throughout Vietnam and nation-wide mobilization order issued.

-- Accordingly, Chinese capture of Lang Son and defeat of VN main force units was, in fact, a significant victory even if in scale it was less than Chinese had hoped. See.

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Kampuchea. As many as 30,000 troops moved from Kampuchea; 2 divisions from Laos.

- ° Removal of troops from Kampuchea (which continues despite Chinese withdrawal) should considerably improve prospects of Kampuchean resistance.
- ° Draw-down of VN forces in Laos has created concern in Hanoi (and among Soviets as well) that China may now attempt to support anti-government elements in Laos.

-- Contrary to situation prior to VN invasion of Kampuchea, Vietnamese now must be prepared for Chinese attack at any time, and must maintain large numbers of main force troops along Sino-VN border against this contingency.

-- In sum, Vietnam now stretched thin militarily, aware that it cannot afford to ignore threat of Chinese attack in any further moves it makes in SEA despite Friendship and Cooperation Treaty with the Soviets, and confronted with heightened domestic economic and political difficulties.

11. Advantages not wholly to Chinese, however, since Soviet role in VN enhanced as a result of the fighting.

-- VN now receiving additional quantities of Soviet military aid, including MIG-21s and SA-3s.

- Soviets may have gained access for their naval vessels to VN ports. Soviet naval ships are now at Danang, and have called at Ho Chi Minh City and Haiphong. No such visits occurred prior to Chinese attack. Soviet transport aircraft also providing VN with internal airlift.
- In event of renewed fighting, Soviets may feel compelled to react more forcefully than in this instance.
- Vietnamese will nevertheless probably try to keep Soviet role from becoming too great, e.g., by holding back on granting full base rights for Soviet air and naval units.

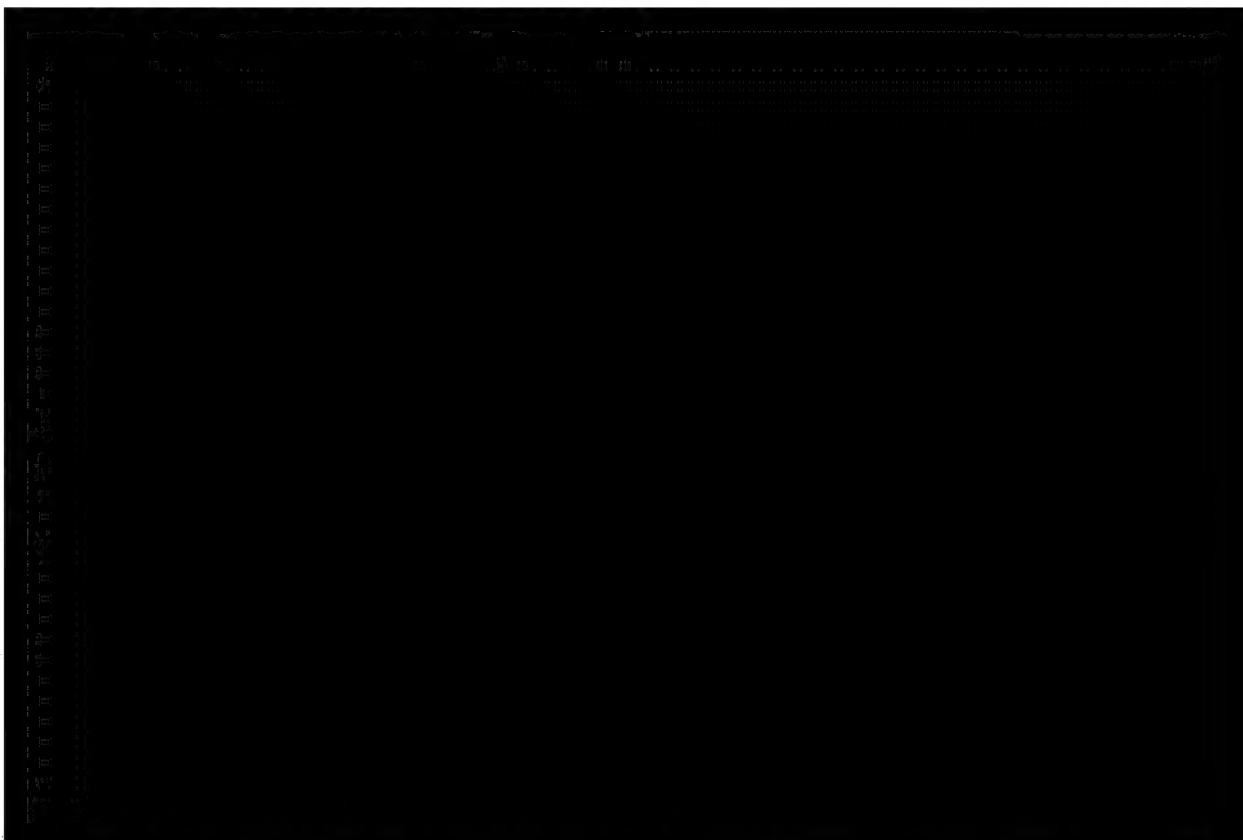
B. Kampucheans continue stiff resistance in countryside

1. Fighting throughout the country, particularly in the SW.
2. VN re-supply effort hampered -- roads trenched, bridges destroyed.
3. Quick VN thrust took major towns and roads but did not destroy Kampuchean forces. Pol Pot believed operating near Battambang.
4. Sixteen of 31 VN combat divisions initially tied down.
  - VN involvement may have reached to as many as 19 divisions.
  - However, Hanoi now withdrawing equipment (artillery, commo gear, anti-tank weapons) supplies, and main force units (infantry, engineers).

- Difficulties thereby increased for VN forces remaining in Kampuchea.
  - Kampuchean forces may even be regrouping into division-size combat units.
5. Chinese apparently managing to get supplies to Kampucheans via Thailand. Kampucheans also appear to have cached ample supplies of food, weapons, and ammunition.
  6. If Kampuchean resistance can hold out until rainy season arrives in May-June, odds favoring Vietnamese will be considerably reduced and prospects improved for establishment of viable anti-VN political structure.
    - However, Pol Pot regime resented by Kampuchean people, who apparently support him either because they hate the Vietnamese more or because they fear reprisals if they cooperate with VN.
  7. Sihanouk in Peking, where Chinese may use him to head a new "coalition government" more acceptable to Kampuchean and world opinion than Pol Pot.
    - Problem for Chinese is that Sihanouk refusing to work with Pol Pot.

C. Soviet Role

1. Soviets watched with concern:

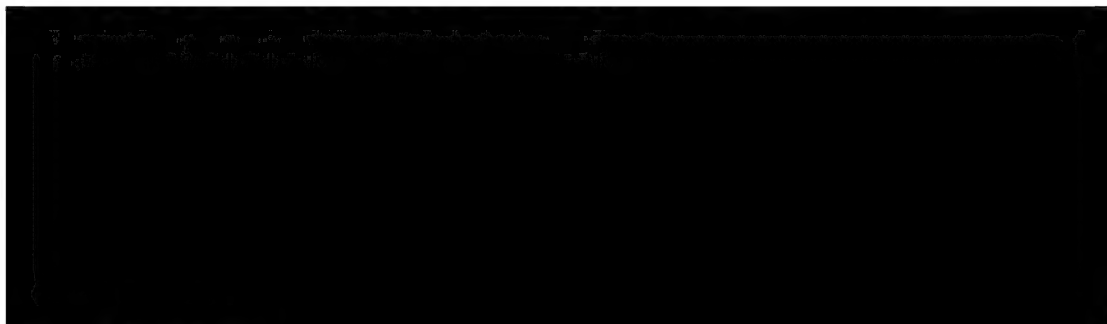


3. Soviet officials warned in non-specific terms of possible Soviet retaliation if Chinese went "too far."

- However, Moscow careful not to commit itself in advance to any course of action.
- Recent speeches by senior Soviet leaders including Brezhnev have not gone beyond demanding that Chinese withdraw from VN; Brezhnev suggested that early conclusion of SALT agreement with US outweighed considerations favoring Soviet intervention -- at least under present circumstances.

- Soviets now congratulating themselves for their "statesmanship" in not being sucked into direct involvement by the Chinese.

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#### 4. Soviet Options

- Consultations (under November 78 Treaty). Chief of Soviet Foreign Ministry SEA Division visited Hanoi recently to discuss "problems of common concern".

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- Naval show of force in Vietnam area; presence at Haiphong, Cam Ranh Bay, or Danang.
  - Five or six ships called at Danang in week beginning 4 March. Possible Haiphong also port of call. (Naval vessels never visited Vietnam before.)



[REDACTED]

-- Military pressure against or across Soviet border with China.

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5.

[REDACTED]

6. Balance in North favors Soviets who could move with little or no warning.

- Soviets - 44 divisions (500,000 men).
- Chinese - 98 divisions (1,700,000 men).
- Soviets - 12,000 tanks.
- Chinese - 4,500 tanks.
- Soviets - 2,250 aircraft.
- Chinese - 2,700 aircraft, but less capable.

7. Soviet reaction related nature and severity of Chinese move against VN.

- Clearly wished to avoid protracted ground engagement in China.
- However, Chinese saw some risk of Soviet attack, sent some reinforcements north and moved back civilian population in NE as well as NW. Chinese probably watching unusual Soviet local movements adjacent to NE China very closely.